

**ANG****Bayan**

Pahayagan ng Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas  
Pinapatnubayan ng Marxismo-Leninismo-Maoismo

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*Editorial*

# Arouse, organize and mobilize women for the revolution!

**T**he importance of the Party and the entire revolutionary movement's task to arouse, organize and mobilize the millions of women from the toiling masses, petty bourgeoisie and other democratic classes in Philippine society cannot be underestimated.

The Party has grown stronger by increasing the number of women Party members and leaders. The increasing role of women in the Party, people's army and the revolutionary mass organizations serves as an inspiration to other women as well as to men in general.

It would be a great loss to the Party and the Philippine revolution if constant attention were not given to drawing the women masses in their numbers to join the revolution and continuously develop them as revolutionaries.

It is in the objec-

tive interest of women from the exploited and oppressed classes and sectors to wage revolution. It is only through revolutionary means that the roots of the exploitation and oppression they suffer can be eradicated. Only revolutionary change can extricate the obdurate economic, political, ideological and socio-cultural roots of the gender and class oppression suffered by the women masses.

But this will not come to pass unless women themselves take action. Women's liberation is a key

issue in people's liberation.

To ensure and render effective the task of arousing, organizing and mobilizing women from the democratic classes in their numbers, the Party grasps their particular political, economic and cultural problems as well as family or domestic issues.

The Party adapts by utilizing creative means of waging propaganda, organizing and mobilizing that genuinely address women's interests.

The Party leads and advances a



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revolutionary women's movement that gives particular attention to their demands. Through this movement, the Party pays attention to the struggle against the exploitative and oppressive relations that bind women to a life of misery and oppression. Thus, women's strength, energy and initiative are given free rein in the service of the struggle.

Women are systematically organized into associations set up in the countryside and cities that serve as deep reservoirs of activists and Red fighters. The most advanced elements from their ranks are recruited into the Party.

In advancing the revolutionary women's movement and through its ever growing contribution to various fields of struggle, the Party and the revolutionary movement also become stronger as a whole.

Together with mobilizing and organizing the women masses in their numbers, the Party also strives to systematically and continuously develop and consolidate cadres and activists from among their ranks.

The key is to forge

unity among revolutionary couples, the units they belong to, and the revolutionary movement in general on the need to address particular problems pertaining to supporting the family which, if not addressed, would hinder the involvement of women comrades in revolutionary action.

A particular issue involves child rearing and child care. Whenever this issue is not properly dealt with, it usually impedes couples' continuous involvement in the revolution, with the wife's revolutionary involvement and development being the first to be sacrificed.

Thus, the Party strives to develop step-by-step a support system geared towards liberating women from being tied down by family and livelihood issues.

Certain sections of the Party organization have come a long way in improving efforts to provide economic, ideolog-

ical and psychological support for the families of comrades who work full-time for the revolution. It is important that other sections of our organization catch up with respect to paying attention to, and exerting efforts, towards this end.

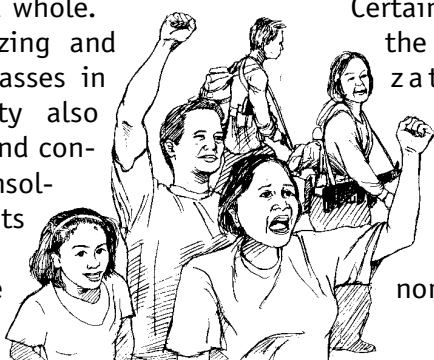
Like any other revolutionary undertaking, the most effective means of doing this is to harness the organized masses' strength and vitality. Caring for and nurturing the next generation of revolutionaries should be a vigorous mass movement.

Beyond striving to address material needs, it is important to continuously raise the level of consciousness regarding the task of supporting revolutionary families. Part of it involves developing the revolutionary consciousness of children, of their caregivers as well as other family members and fellow villagers. Children, in particular, can perform various revolutionary tasks to develop their minds, knowledge and practice.

It is likewise necessary to raise the consciousness of comrades regarding women's liberation and raising revolutionary families so as to forge the ideological unity needed to advance these efforts. Collective responsibility is also a must, as well as the assistance of concerned units with respect to these issues.

Above all, the greatest assurance that the particular interests of women are addressed both within and outside the revolution is for the revolutionary women's movement to strengthen itself.

Let us continue to encourage even more women to embrace the revolution and continue to raise the level of their revolutionary involvement. Our victory in this arena is a kindred victory of the revolutionary movement for women's and people's liberation. **AB**



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# The condition of women workers

*AB is publishing a situationer on women workers as part of a series on the condition of women in various sectors.*

**T**he intensified poverty suffered by the Filipino people is acutely felt by women workers. They are victims of an exploitative and oppressive social system and reactionary government policies. They are denied their rights and the most basic services to advance their welfare.

Compared to male workers, a considerably bigger number of women workers are unemployed. Those who do find work receive even less than the slave-wages or salaries that their class brothers receive.

Moreover, the maddening responsibility of trying to get by with the family's earnings and see to its daily welfare and well-being rests upon their shoulders.

## **Most of them are invisible in official statistics**

The number of Filipinos eligible to work (15 years old and up) increased by 1.45 million last year. But according to government statistics, a mere 624,000 (43%) had the opportunity to participate in production and thus become officially counted as part of the labor force.

Half, or 739,000 of those eligible to work are women. But from this number, only 94,000 (or 12.7%) actually participate in production and are officially counted

as part of the labor force. The 645,000 (87.3%) are set aside as "reserve labor forces" and thus do not appear in the official statistics of employment and unemployment. The bulk of this number are housewives and are denied the opportunity to participate in social processes.

## **Widespread unemployment**

In a society with a dire shortage of jobs, there are far too few women who are employed. For every ten workers, only four are women. For every ten women workers, four work part-time as a result of capitalists' policy to cut costs and reduce work-hours. For every three contractual workers, one is a woman.

Likewise, for every ten jobless workers, four are women. From 2000 to 2002, more and more women workers have been losing their jobs. Many of their workplaces have shut down due to the intensified economic crisis.

This is starkly illustrated by the folding up of many businesses involved in garments production, where half of the labor force are women.

From 2002 to 2003, up to 409,000 women lost their jobs, most of them from the agricultural sector. A large number of those laid off were salesladies and others from businesses involved in wholesale and retail trading (such as

supermarkets).

One indicator of the absence of regular jobs is the rising number of women (195,000 within one year) who end up becoming domestic helpers or make do with being employed in small stores owned by others.

The bulk of the population of women (over 12.4 million or 48% of the entire population eligible to work) is in the countryside. But almost half of this number are not regarded as part of the labor force. Among the women with jobs, 36% of those who receive wages and salaries work as domestic helpers or peddlers in marketplaces or in small stores in the countryside.

Meanwhile, 28% are categorized as "unpaid family labor," while 36% are "own account workers".

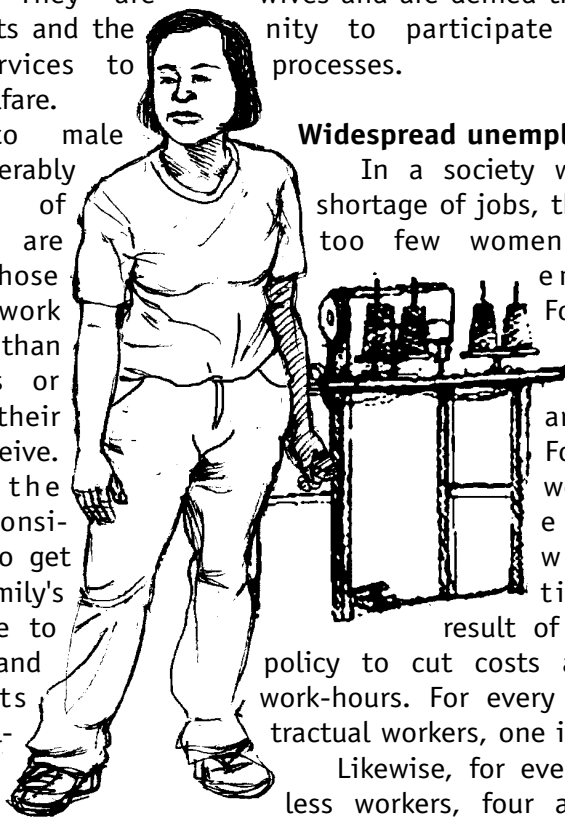
These categories are merely means by which the reactionary government conceals the dearth of jobs or adequate employment in the cities and the countryside.

In the face of all this, more and more women are going abroad to seek gainful employment or to earn adequate income. Hundreds of thousands of women seek jobs in other countries as DH (domestic helpers) and caregivers.

According to a study conducted by a women's organization, caregiver training centers receive 20 applicants a day, 95% of them women.

## **Extremely low wages**

If they are able to land jobs, women workers receive wages that are even lower than that of their male counterparts. A woman worker receives only 82 centavos for



every peso that a male worker receives. No wage increases have been granted for the past several years despite the spiralling prices of goods and basic services.

Most of them receive wages much lower than the minimum daily wage of P250. This is far less than what a family of six needs to live decently.

On many occasions, these families simply reduce their food intake as a means of coping with the daily grind. They need to work

themselves almost to the point of death just to be able to meet their families' food, health, housing and education needs.

The continued hike in charges for public utility services is a heavy added burden. In the past year alone, electricity charges increased by 76% while charges for water went up by 50-65%. The prices of petroleum products, including the price of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), also rose 12-16%. AB

### Violence against women and children:

- × One woman or child is raped every one hour and sixteen minutes.
- × One woman or child is molested every four hours.
- × One woman is beaten up every one hour and 24 minutes.
- × One child is beaten up every three hours.

## Interview with Salud Roja, CPP-Central Luzon spokesperson

*On March 2, Ang Bayan interviewed Communist Party of the Philippines-Central Luzon spokesperson Salud Roja on various regional, national and women's issues.*

**I**n 2000, the Party regional committee in Central Luzon chose Ka Salud to become the regional Party organization's spokesperson alongside Ka Jose Agtalon, the New People's Army's spokesperson in the region.

With Ka Salud's appointment, the Party has become more active in clarifying many issues and developments in the region that are of major importance to the Party, the revolutionary movement and the people. It has more vigorously exposed the ruling regime and its henchmen in the military and local politics, and advanced and defended the revolutionary movement against the government and military's lies and deception.

Gender was not an issue in Ka Salud's appointment as regional Party spokesperson. Nonetheless, it

has brought to the fore the Party's capability to develop women cadres as they carry out their revolutionary tasks. Likewise, it has also provided an added push to advancing women's issues along with national and regional issues.

It was not difficult for Ka Salud to carry out her new responsibilities. Ka Salud hailed from the petty bourgeois stratum and has well-developed propaganda skills. She was among the youth who became politically conscious during the 1980s and volunteered to be deployed to the countryside and join the people's army in the spirit of the Second Great Rectification Movement.

### Women organizing by the Party

Women organizing is proceeding vigorously in CL, according to Ka Salud. "In accordance with the Party's general principles and policies, the Party and the revolutionary movement give particular attention to organizing women, mainly the



women toiling masses, within the framework of the people's democratic revolution," says Ka Salud.

In the countryside and in the cities, organizing groups, organizing committees and chapters of MAKIBAKA, the revolutionary organization of Filipino women, are continuously being set up, the open democratic women's movement advanced and women mobilized to advance women's issues. Women are also recruited to join revolutionary mass organizations of peasants, youth and other sectors. Simultaneous with all this is the advance of the open democratic mass movement and people's mobilizations on both general and particular sectoral issues. Above all,

# Increase the number of women Red fighters

**T**he large-scale participation of women in the armed struggle is one of the Communist Party's bigger victories in the women's liberation movement in the Philippines. From being confined to household work and being held captive by feudal and bourgeois concepts that demean them, women are being given the space and the opportunity to participate in the struggle to liberate the people and for their own liberation.

It is extremely important for women to participate in the armed revolution. Thus, the Party reiterates its call to increase the number of women fighters and to ensure that they are encouraged

and given the opportunity to carry out ever weightier and ever higher responsibilities in the people's army as fighters and officers. It is one of the important calls with regard to strengthening the New People's Army and intensifying people's war.

The large-scale participation of women in the armed struggle and their carrying out important tasks in the NPA show that the NPA is a genuine people's army. Through women fighters, the NPA has more effectively aroused women and encouraged their political involvement. Women Red fighters serve as models and inspirations to the women masses, and even to the men.

The Party and the NPA recognize the equal rights of women and men in any field of action and struggle. There is full cooperation between women and men fighters within the people's army. At the same time, the NPA recognizes the particular needs of women and takes the necessary steps to encourage their continuous participation and development in the field of armed revolution.

In recognition of the distinguished contributions of women fighters in the armed struggle, *Ang Bayan* is publishing the stories and experiences of Ka Elena, Ka Jiji and Ka Alex—women fighters of the people's army.

the Party actively encourages women to work full-time in the countryside and in the armed struggle. "In fact, a significant number of women have joined the NPA in Central Luzon," says Ka Salud.

The most advanced elements of the NPA and the mass organizations are recruited into the Party and are integrated into Party formations within those organizations.

This coming March 8, the revolutionary movement in CL will be celebrating International Working Women's Day along with the rest of the country and the entire world. "This day is important to all women who are in the process of overcoming and struggling against the strictures of their traditional feudal role as beings subservient to men and inactive in political and social life," said Ka Salud.

"It is the women in the people's army who conduct the highest level of struggle to oppose and eradicate national, class and gender oppres-

sion. They carry on these struggles alongside the men." Ka Salud hailed women revolutionary martyrs like Rowena Bayani who was slain by the military in Aurora province last year.

## **Engaging the military in the field of propaganda**

As spokesperson, Salud Roja often confronts slanderous statements made by the AFP's Northern Luzon Command (Nolcom) against the NPA in Central Luzon. According to Ka Salud, "The Nolcom is enraged at the NPA because its forces sustained many casualties in NPA counter-attacks last year."

In Zambales, for example, the enemy suffered up to 67 killed during encounters with the NPA in 2003. Many of these encounters were defensive actions where the NPA was able to turn the tables on the enemy, inflict heavy casualties on the AFP and effect a safe retreat.

To cover up its weaknesses, it

has become the Nolcom's policy to weave lies about their casualties. It usually declares civilians caught in the crossfire or even slain soldiers of the AFP as NPA casualties.

As recently as the first week of February, Ka Salud once more refuted the Nolcom's lies. She belied the 69th IB's claims that it had killed a Red fighter after encircling an NPA unit in Barangay Salu, Porac, Pampanga.

"The truth is that the NPA successfully repulsed the military's attacks despite having been at a disadvantage at the beginning due to the fact that the enemy had already pinpointed their location and had also blocked their retreat routes," said Ka Salud. The four-hour running gunbattle saw the retreating NPA unit clashing with AFP forces thrice, dealing blows on the enemy with every encounter. According to reports gathered by Ka Salud, up to 21 soldiers were killed and 15 wounded on the AFP side. ■



## Ka Elena, commander

**L**ike her fellow oppressed from the Isneg tribe, Ka Elena was raised in poverty. She was born in the shadows of Marag Valley. At an early age, her feet became accustomed to trails leading to the heart of the forest. Her palms grew rough from clearing and tilling their farms in the mountains, her body sturdied from carrying sacks of bananas and cassava.

Ka Elena easily grasped and embraced the aims of the revolutionary movement the first time she heard the explanations of New People's Army (NPA) fighters in 1982. She joined the youth organization in her area. After some years, she volunteered to join the NPA where she was recognized not only as an outstanding fighter, but grew to become an excellent commander.

As a Red commander, Ka Elena has been characterized by her clarity of thought, bravery, agility and physical strength and knowledge of tactics in the midst of fighting. As commander, Ka Elena has expertly led Red fighters in their maneuvers in order to win tactical offensives launched by her unit, effect the unit's safe retreat even in the direst of situations and carry out counter-offensives.

Ka Elena was one of the valiant fighters who braved the most vicious enemy operations during the 1980s in Cagayan Valley. She was one of a few select fighters who became part of a special NPA unit in Apayao in the mid-1980s that faced many battles while crossing the mountains from Apayao to Isabela. Like her other comrades in the unit, Ka Elena did not lose heart in spite of the hardships and sacrifices they endured, and despite their month-long jour-

ney across the mountains without adequate food and water.

They experienced many setbacks as a result of the erroneous policy of premature regularization and which brought on large and intense enemy operations during the 1980s. In the face of all this, Ka Elena remained steadfast in her revolutionary stand. More than this, she was among those who embraced the Second Great Rectification Movement forthwith and carried it out when it was launched during the 1990s.

Amid the surging tide of armed struggle, Ka Elena came to know and love Ka Paeng, another fine NPA commander. In the heart of Cagayan Valley's mountains, their love borne out of people's war saw fulfillment in marriage in 1986. Their two children grew up in the bosom of the masses and nurtured by their parents' love.

Ka Elena is respected and admired as a woman fighter. In battle, her steady voice rises, directing the unit's maneuvers and shattering whatever anxieties the comrades may have. Whenever the enemy hears her voice, usually they sneeringly say, "It's just a woman." But not long after, their condescension gives way to fear due to the expertise and courage that Ka Elena demonstrates as a commander.

Ka Elena has undergone many trainings, including the defunct "Advanced Military Course." She also trained in commando maneuvers, sniping and taekwondo.

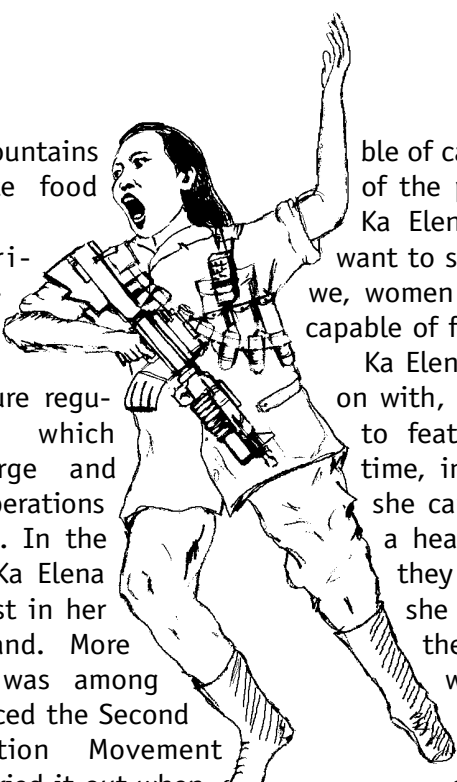
"At every opportunity, I want to show that we women are also capa-

ble of carrying out the tasks of the people's army," says Ka Elena. "In particular, I want to show the enemy that we, women revolutionaries, are capable of fighting them."

Ka Elena is a force to reckon with, even when it comes to feats of strength. One time, in an intense battle, she carried with one hand a heavy radio transceiver they had seized, even as she carried her rifle in the other. When she was eight months pregnant with her youngest child, she single-handedly carried fifty pieces of canned goods and other equipment up a high mountain.

Her being a woman is an important part of the people's army's approach to the masses. Although she is often greeted with uncertainty by some ("to think you're a woman," they would chide her), this is quickly dispelled the moment the comrades show the masses their respect and particular regard for women guerrillas and the equal rights enjoyed by women fighters.

Comrades always take notice of, and value, Ka Elena's military knowledge and skills. After several years of service in a special NPA unit, Ka Elena was assigned to perform various other tasks. Wherever she is deployed, her military knowledge and experience as well as the other things she has learned from performing other lines of work are always put to full use. Now, in helping train new fighters, her colorful experiences serve to inspire a new generation of Red fighters, especially women. AB



## Ka Jiji and Ka Alex: Young women fighters

**K**a Alex and Ka Jiji are among the women Red fighters of an oversized platoon of the New People's Army (NPA) in the southern guerrilla front of Cagayan Valley. Ka Alex, 23, is her squad's political guide and Ka Jiji, 19, serves as her team's political guide. The women Red fighters comprise 25% of the people's army in this guerrilla front.

"Women are given the highest respect in the movement and their rights are thoroughly recognized," says Ka Jiji. "And this is genuine respect, unlike in bourgeois society where 'respect' is based on women's so-called frailties."

Ka Alex stated proudly that, "It was only here that I felt fully valued as a woman!" She emphasized that what she was referring to was the entirety of her being as a woman, "not just someone who's good for bed, the kitchen or the house." She also said that there was no discrimination in the movement, even in the traditional "macho" world of military work: "If you have the potential or the capability, the movement always recognizes it." Ka Alex placed third in her batch of 25 Red fighters who took the Basic Politico-Military Course.

This doesn't mean, however, that the revolutionary movement does not bear marks of the backward society from which it sprung. Both Ka Jiji and Ka Alex said matter-of-factly that traces of feudal and bourgeois outlooks and habits remain, especially among new comrades. "It's unavoidable," says Ka Alex, "but the difference is that in the movement, everyone, without exception, strives to

change such attitudes and habits." Ka Jiji added that what is important is that, "we all begin with the concept that we do not discriminate on the basis of gender and that everyone has important potential."

According to Ka Alex, the most effective means for women to demonstrate their potential to fellow comrades and even to themselves is through constantly striving to fulfill such potential. She asserted that, "women are capable of engaging in physical tasks, run generators, build huts... everything! Like men, we are capable of excelling in this and in all aspects of our revolutionary work."

### **The women's advantage**

Actually, there are certain things that women Red fighters do even better than the men. One of the more important areas is raising the consciousness of the masses to combat feudal and bourgeois attitudes towards women.

The strength, commitment and service to the people shown by women revolutionaries effectively shatter backward social concepts that call on women to confine themselves to such superficial things such as being beautiful, meek and subservient to men.

According to Ka Jiji, "such feudal outlooks on women change when the masses see us carrying heavy backpacks, ammo belts and



firearms, walking long distances and fighting too." On her part, Ka Alex mentioned the frequent comments of women peasants who become witness to the fact that women guerrillas are just as good as the male fighters—they also realize that they do have their own potential. This also boosts the morale of male comrades.

Ka Jiji also pointed out that women are better at encouraging other barrio women to join the revolution, whether as members of local mass organizations or as full-time Red fighters.

Also because of the prevalent outlook that they are weaker and not as threatening as men, the masses are more comfortable when faced with women guerrillas compared to male comrades. "Thus," says Ka Alex, "we are usually the ones who first knock on the doors of the masses especially in the middle of the night or those we don't know too well."

Ka Jiji added that the masses, including the men, seem to have an easier time approaching and talking to them: "I notice that they are more comfortable with women and more open to share their problems with us. They pour out their grievances to us." AB

# Makabayang Kilusan ng Bagong Kababaihan

March 18, 2004 marks the 32nd anniversary of the founding congress of the Makabayang Kilusan ng Bagong Kababaihan (MAKIBAKA - Patriotic Movement of New Women). The celebration is opportune especially at this time when the revolutionary women's movement has been gathering momentum and gaining strength in various parts of the country.

MAKIBAKA was founded in recognition of the enormous role of women in the revolution's overall advance. It recognized the fact that women, like men in a semi-feudal and semicolonial society, suffer intense exploitation and oppression. Like



men of the oppressed classes, women have no voice in decision-making in society. But more than this, they have no voice, or have a very weak one, in the workplace, at home, and in the various sections of society.

MAKIBAKA was founded to address the particular interests of women. It understood that as long as the exploitative and oppressive relations that tie women down to a wretched and oppressed state are ignored, women's strength, vitality and initiative for struggle can never be fully unleashed.

At its inception, MAKIBAKA organized mainly women students. It also organized women in urban poor communities and factories. MAKIBAKA also established KALAYAAN, an alliance against the rising prices of commodities, that


likewise became the impetus for the first women's rally in 1971.

When martial law was declared in 1972, MAKIBAKA's members went to the countryside to join the armed struggle. Others joined the urban underground. Although the revolutionary women's movement reaped many victories in the beginning, MAKIBAKA also suffered setbacks when deviations from the correct line became prevalent. But MAKIBAKA took a stand in favor of the Second Great Rectification Movement and persevered in further advancing the national-democratic revolution.


At present, its principal focus is the establishment of MAKIBAKA chapters among the women toiling masses in the countryside and cities. Women's rights and welfare

are advanced through the establishment of MAKIBAKA chapters and the implementation of their programs.

These programs involve, among others, improving the economic status of women, promoting equal responsibility in child-rearing, ensuring democracy in family relations, establishing health services, safeguarding reproductive rights and advancing the rights and welfare of children. Women participate in, and support, the armed struggle as the principal form of struggle against the semicolonial and semifeudal system that perpetuates the antiwomen feudal-patriarchal order.

With the help of the New People's Army, hundreds of women in the countryside have been recruited into mass organizations nationwide. More and more MAKIBAKA chapters are being set up in the barrios. In the cities, MAKIBAKA reaches out to and organizes a large number of women workers, semi-proletarians, urban poor, youth and students, professionals and other impoverished, oppressed and exploited women. 

**Malayang Pilipina resumes publication:** MAKIBAKA's official publication *Malayang Pilipina* has resumed publication with the aim of helping further develop the political consciousness of MAKIBAKA members and reaching an ever bigger number of women to draw them into the women's liberation movement and the advance of the national-democratic revolution.

Set to come out quarterly, *Malayang Pilipina* resumed publication in August 2003 and is now on its third issue. 





## Establishing a MAKIBAKA chapter in Metro Manila

*In July last year, AB published an account of the formation of a Makabayang Kilusan ng Bagong Kababaihan chapter in a barrio in Bicol. It was but one of many chapters formed in the countryside in various parts of the country. This time, AB is publishing an account of the formation of a MAKIBAKA chapter in Metro Manila excerpted from an article that appeared in MAKIBAKA's publication Malayang Pilipina (Liberated Filipina).*

It was on June 15, 2003 when a chapter of MAKIBAKA was formed in Barangay Alitaptap. Fifteen MAKIBAKA members gathered for the occasion. According to MAKIBAKA spokesperson Ka Malaya Libertad, the occasion was a historic one since it was the very first chapter formally established in Metro Manila since the Second Great Rectification Movement.

Like in other impoverished communities in Metro Manila, many of the residents of Barangay Alitaptap fled the provinces because of militarization and poverty.

It was the women who were first organized in this barangay. For two years, they carried out tasks as part of a support-liaison committee. It was May 2003 when a women's organizing group (OG) was formed in Barangay Alitaptap. Not long after, the formation of a MAKIBAKA chapter was decided upon. To prepare, the women conducted study sessions on topics that included the Situation of the Revolutionary Movement. They also discussed the MAKIBAKA orientation.

The women's chapter in Barangay Alitaptap has made an enormous contribution to the revolution's all-sided advance with its members organizing their respective families and others in the community. From their efforts, a chapter of KASAMA (an organization of workers and semi-proletarians in urban poor communities) will soon be formed in Barangay Alitaptap.

Other chapters of MAKIBAKA are also set to be established in other communities of Metro Manila in the coming months. AB

## NPA captures soldiers



**A** Philippine Army lieutenant and another soldier are now being held by the New People's Army (NPA) in Bicol. They were captured when Red fighters ambushed their unit in Barangay Banga, Tinambac, Camarines Sur on March 2.

The captives are 1Lt. Ronaldo Sedelino, commanding officer of the 42nd IB and PFC Ronel Lemiño. They are now in the custody of the Romulo Jallores Command (RJC) of the NPA in Bicol.

The RJC has entrusted to the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) peace panel the conduct of negotiations with the government of the Philippines for the release of the prisoners of war. While they are in NPA custody, the NPA will ensure the safety and humane treatment of the captives in accordance with pertinent policies of the NPA and the revolutionary movement, the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) and international rules of war.

As in the past, a necessary condition for the release of the captives is the immediate suspension of military operations by government forces in the vicinity where the captives are being held. In this regard, the RJC has demanded that the Arroyo regime stop all of its military operations in the entire province of Camarines Sur and surrounding areas.

Three soldiers, including a corporal, were killed in the ambush, while two M203s and an M14 were confiscated from them. The NPA sustained no casualties.

Meanwhile, members of the Bonifacio Pasakan Command-Guerrilla Front 2 of Negros also captured Eduardo Raya, a CAFGU element, when Red fighters attacked the headquarters of the 44th CAFGU Coy under the 61st IB in Barangay Mahalang, Himamaylan City on February 15. AB



## Other tactical offensives launched from February to March

An NPA platoon attacked the 77th IB detachment in Balbalan, Kalinga noon of February 28, seizing an M60 machine gun and bullets of assorted caliber. Two soldiers were wounded in the raid. A sergeant from the 21st IB was killed the following day when the NPA ambushed enemy forces launching a pursuit operation against them.

Apart from this, four more enemy forces were killed and seven wounded in other tactical offensives launched by the NPA from the last week of February to the first week of March in various parts of the Philippines.

In South Cotabato, a Sgt. Oldarico Camarista was killed while six CAFGU elements were wounded when the NPA ambushed 27th IB troops on patrol in Sitio Bung-it, Barangay Palo 19 along the border of Tampacan and Koronadal City on the night of March 4.

Meanwhile, the NPA ambushed and killed two paramilitary elements of the Revolutionary Proletarian Army (RPA) aboard motorcycles in Sitio Estaka, Barangay Humay-Humay, Guihulngan, Negros Oriental on March 3.

Prior to this, an element of the 5th Scout Rangers was wounded in an encounter with the NPA on February 23 in Barangay Kabitan, Mandaon, Masbate.

In Barangay Pinawpawan, Igaras, Iloilo, the NPA ambushed troops of the 12th IB Cadre Coy on February 21, killing a CAFGU element. AB

## NPA confronts Isabela congressman

The Benito Tesorio Front (BTF) of the New People's Army-Cagayan Valley confronted and disarmed the campaign convoy of Congressman Giorgidi "Gigi" Aggabao and other politicians in Barangay Nilumiso, Echague, Isabela around 12:30 noon on February 23, seizing 12 firearms.

Aggabao of the 4th district of Isabela, Mayor Virgilio Padilla of San Agustin, Mayor Leoncio Kiat of Echague and other candidates for municipal councilor were campaigning without permission from the NPA command. They had just come from a mass meeting called by politicians in the barangay center.

A large unit of the NPA put up a roadblock and stopped their convoy near the center of Barangay Nilumiso. Prior to this, the BTF had already received information on Aggabao's plan to enter the area and campaign. Aggabao's party was told that they had first to consult with the NPA command in the area. The politicians ignored this advisory and even brought goons with

high-powered firearms.

Four M16s, two carbines, four .45s, a 9 mm, a mini-Uzi machine pistol, a .22, and assorted bullets, magazines and ammunition belts were confiscated.

A .45 pistol was returned when the convoy was allowed to leave. A policeman identified himself as the gun's owner and pleaded to have it returned, saying he would have to pay for it from his own salary. The NPA confiscated but later returned the group's cellphones.

The NPA held separate consultations with the politicians, explaining matters to them as another dialogue was also conducted with the more than 30 staff and bodyguards that accompanied the convoy.

Contrary to media reports, Aggabao came to the area to campaign and not to conduct a medical mission. The politicians' convoy was allowed to leave unharmed and no negotiations for Permits to Campaign (PTC) took place. Above all, the Red fighters treated Aggabao's party well. AB

## Ambush on Congresswoman Sato, a stern warning

The NPA confronted a congressional candidate on March 3 because of her deliberate disregard of the New People's Army's advisory not to bring armed bodyguards into revolutionary territory.

The NPA ambushed Congresswoman Josephine Sato, another politician with her, and three armed bodyguards from the Occidental Mindoro PNP as their vehicle entered Barangay Alacaak, Sta. Cruz.

In a statement, Lucio de Guzman Command (NPA-Mindoro) spokesperson Ka Higom Magarang said that they had already sent word to politicians in the island not to bring in forces from the military, police, paramilitary units or private armies while campaigning in revolutionary territory.

If Sato had not brought armed forces with her, it would have been possible just to have a simple dialogue, said Magarang. But Sato arrogantly said that the NPA would not be able to do anything, what with the concentration of military troops in the province.

Sato is running for governor of Occidental Mindoro under Arroyo's Lakas-Christian-Muslim Democrats party. AB

# Israeli wall in Palestinian territory

Israel has brazenly established a 700-kilometer wall (which it calls a "security barrier") within Palestinian territory to clinch its seizure of sections of Palestine it has occupied after the 1967 Middle East war and additional lands that Israeli settlers have occupied in Palestine's West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The wall consists of a series of concrete fences several score meters high, deep trenches, high voltage barbed wire with alarms, and a series of guard posts and towers in close proximity to each other.

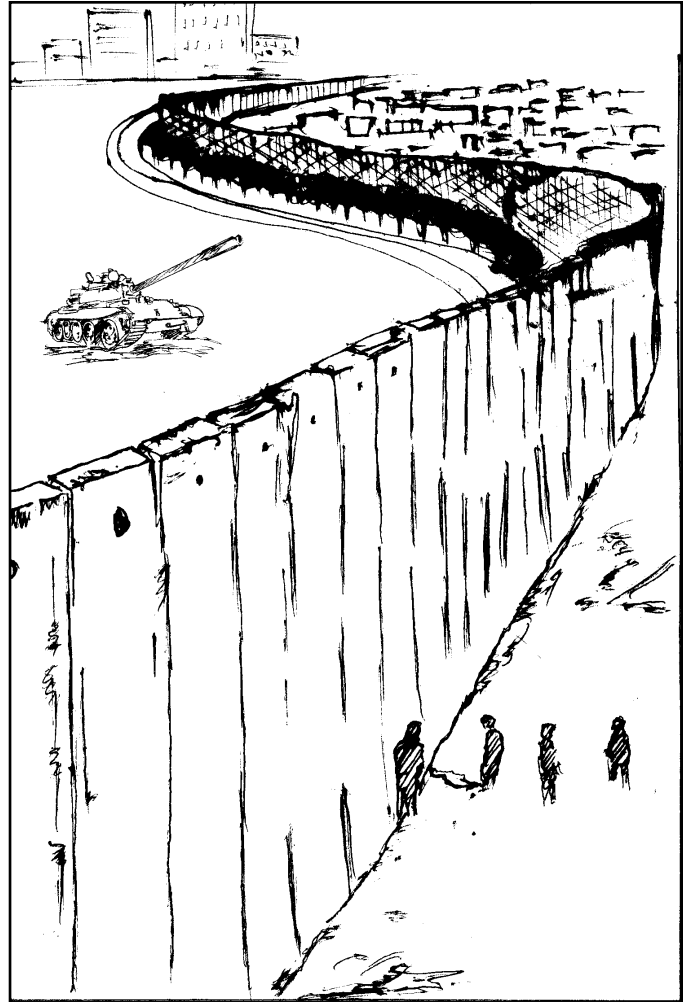
The walls fence in the most fertile and most favorable lands, the most abundant water and other natural resources, and the most vibrant market centers in the West Bank. Palestinian residents and farmers who used to live in the area have been forbidden outright from returning. Israel has now set aside these lands for Israeli settlers that occupy 150 colonies in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The bulk of the remaining portions for Palestinians comprises difficult, barren and unfavorable terrain that lacks even potable water, is hardly arable and is without any commercial activity.

All of Palestine has long been like a huge prison. The wall has made things much worse because it physically confines over 2.5 million Palestinians. Israel has also set up 16 separate enclaves in the remaining 42% of the West Bank left for Palestinians. The enclaves are not connected to each other save for bypass channels which are exclusively for Israeli use. The place has been likened to a maximum security prison compound with several isolation cells. There are no passageways between the enclaves for Palestinians. Official permits and strict requirements are necessary before anyone is allowed to pass these checkpoints.

The wall obstructs and destroys the livelihood, political life and social interaction of over 400,000 Palestinians who are denied their freedom and human rights.

The wall is but one of the many forms of intense suppression and brutal attacks perpetrated by the Israeli government against the Palestinians.

The Israeli government claims that the "security barrier" had to be erected to protect Israelis from so-called Palestinian "terrorists," especially Palestinian suicide bombers.



But as a result of this and many other unjust and extremely cruel anti-Palestinian policies of the Israeli government, the Palestinian people's anger has intensified and their struggle against the Israeli government stepped up. Protests waged by the Palestinians have not weakened, but have grown stronger.

The Israelis have responded with greater violence. The Israeli armed forces continue to unleash attacks, bombings, killings, arrests and other acts of cruelty against the Palestinians. Just this February 26, Israeli soldiers shot at protesting Palestinians, killing two and seriously wounding over 12. The protesters tried to stop the bulldozing of their lands in the West Bank to pave the way for the "security barrier."

On the other hand, there is growing support and sympathy from the world's peoples for the Palestinian people's struggle. Opposition to the oppression of



Palestinians is strongest from revolutionary, anti-imperialist and progressive organizations as well as from Arab and Islamic countries and organizations.

The US feigns having reservations about the "security barrier"'s usurpation of the West Bank. In truth, US imperialism has always been behind and is a partner of Israel in its oppression and bullying posture in Palestine and other Middle Eastern countries. Israel spends \$2.5 million for every mile of the "security barrier" constructed, the bulk of which comes from the \$9 billion worth of new US assistance to Israel.

This has caused Israel and the US' growing isolation worldwide. Just last October 21, 2003, the European Union sponsored a resolution later approved by the vast majority of the UN General Assembly calling for a halt to the construction of more of the "security barrier" and the dismantling of parts that had already been erected. Except for the US and Israel, the only ones that did not vote for the resolution were Micronesia and the Marshall Islands, two small US neocolonies in the Asia-Pacific. There are likewise two similar resolutions already pending in the Security Council since October 14, which the US continues to veto.

On February 23, the UN filed a case against the "security barrier" with the International Court of Justice (ICJ) based on a resolution agreed to by 90 member countries and the Palestinian Authority (PA) as observer. Apart from the objections filed by the UN and the PA, 44 countries, the Organization of Islamic Conference and the Arab League, also filed their respective objections. Israel, the US, Australia and five small US neocolonies objected to and boycotted the hearing.

Even the government of the United Kingdom which usually supports various US policies and actions in the Middle East is divided on the issue of the "security barrier." UK Foreign Affairs Minister Jack Straw has called the "security barrier" illegal. The investigative commission formed by the UK parliament to study this issue also denounced it and said that "it is a deliberate Israeli strategy to bring the Palestinian people to its knees."

Many Israelis are also opposed to the "security barrier" and question the justness and legality of its construction. On February 29, the Israeli Supreme Court issued a restraining order after a case was filed by the Popular Committee Against the Wall, which includes Israelis and Palestinians opposed to the "security barrier". AB



## Arroyo's threats fail to daunt transport sector

Over 500,000 drivers led by PISTON-KMU and STOP (Samahan ng mga Tsuper at Opereytor ng Pilipinas) launched a "Transport Stoppage" from March 1-2 in 24 provinces and cities nationwide. The strike paralyzed 80-99% of transportation routes in Central Luzon (Bataan, Zambales, Pampanga, Tarlac, Nueva Ecija, Bulacan and Pangasinan), Southern Tagalog (Laguna, Cavite, Batangas and Lucena City), Bicol (Legazpi City, Naga City and other areas of Camarines Sur), Visayas (Cebu City, Bacolod City and other areas of Negros Occidental), Mindanao (in the cities of Davao, Cagayan de Oro and Cotabato), and Metro Manila (San Juan, Marikina, Pasig, Baclaran, Valenzuela City and Alabang).

Meanwhile, the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN), Bayan Muna, Anakpawis, Gabriela Women's Party, Migrante and Anak ng Bayan launched support actions in various "strike centers" set up by the striking drivers.

The drivers are clamoring for a P1.50 fare increase and a rollback in oil prices. As a result of their actions, Petron, Shell and Caltex were forced to grant a one-peso discount for every liter of diesel bought from gasoline stations in Metro Manila and the provinces.

Nonetheless, the drivers do not feel content with the very small and temporary discounts in diesel prices extracted from the oil companies.

Since oil prices were deregulated in April 1996, up to the start of 2004, there have been 58 successive oil price hikes resulting in an average 224% increase in the price of petroleum products. Meanwhile, the government froze transport fares, leaving drivers to bear the brunt of the increase in the price of the diesel they consume. Their earnings have continuously shrunk.

According to IBON Databank, a driver earns a mere P160 for every 12 hours on the road compared to the more than P560 spent daily by a typical Metro Manila family.